

Papilionidae family

Chequered Swallowtail

*Papilio demoleus sthenelus***Abundance in Adelaide area:** Uncommon**Flight:** Sep–May**Wingspan:** m 72 mm; f 75 mm**Mature larva length:** 45 mm

This lovely Swallowtail is an occasional visitor to Adelaide in the course of its migratory flights. It will breed here when it finds its caterpillar food plant, but probably cannot survive the winters. Young caterpillars resemble bird droppings during the first four instars, but in the fifth are mostly green. Its caterpillar food plants (*Cullen* spp.) make an attractive addition to gardens and butterflies can also use the flowers as a nectar source. The Common Grass-blue butterfly also uses these plants for breeding.

Interestingly, the butterfly emerges from the pupa in as little as three weeks or as much as ten months, or longer. This can help the survival of this arid-adapted species in adverse years.

Caterpillar food plants: Scurf-peas (*Cullen* spp.). Caterpillars eat the flowers and soft green parts of these annual or short-lived perennial plants.

Adelaide native species: Tall Scurf-pea (*Cullen australasicum*; previously known as *Psoralea*).

Other South Australian species: Annual Scurf-pea (*Cullen cinereum*), Native Lucerne (*Cullen graveolens*), Spreading Scurf-pea (*Cullen patens*).

Though comparatively rare in the Adelaide region, this butterfly still breeds in the area, wherever it encounters the now rare remnant examples of its caterpillar food plant, the Scurf-pea.



The Chequered Swallowtail is one of the largest butterflies regularly seen in southern Australia and as such, with its pale yellow and black colouration and rapid flight, attracts attention from those who have an interest in butterflies.

This butterfly is quite different in appearance from other South Australian species. Firstly it is quite large, being from 72–75 mm across the expanded wings. The background colour of the entire wing surface is usually yellow but ranges from near white to quite a deep chrome yellow. On the upper surface of the hind wing, there is a blue and black 'eyespot' near the junction of the outer and upper margins of the wing. At the angle between the outer and lower margins of this wing there is a large red spot, situated at the base of the broad, black marginal marking.

The mature caterpillar is roughly cylindrical and slightly humped towards the head. The body colour ranges from green to yellow-green, with thin black areas between the body segments. There are numerous, black-edged, orange spots, and a yellow line along the lower margin of the body.

